



T H E U S O N I A N H O U S E

SOUVENIR OF THE EXHIBITION: 60 YEARS OF LIVING ARCHITECTURE

THE WORK OF

THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

FRANK
LOYD
WRIGHT

CONCERNING THE USONIAN HOUSE:

To say the house planted by myself on the good earth of the Chicago prairie as early as 1900, or earlier, was the first truly democratic expression of our democracy in Architecture would start a controversy with professional addicts who believe Architecture has no political (therefore no social) significance. So, let's say that the spirit of democracy — freedom of the individual as an individual — took hold of the house as it then was, took off the attic and the porch, pulled out the basement, and made a single spacious, harmonious unit of living room, dining room and kitchen, with appropriate entry conveniences. The sleeping rooms were convenient to baths approached in a segregated, separate extended wing and the whole place was flooded with sunlight from floor to ceiling with glass.

The materials of the outside walls came inside just as appropriately and freely as those of the inside walls went outside. Intimate harmony was thus established not only in the house but with its site. Came the "Open Plan". The housewife herself thus planned for became the central figure in her ménage and her housewifery a more charming feature (according to her ability) of her domestic establishment.

She was now more hostess "officio", operating in gracious relation to her own home, instead of being a kitchen-mechanic behind closed doors.

Nobody need care now how this thing happened. It may not be important. But if not — what is?

In addition to this new freedom with its implication of fresh

responsibility for the individual homester came a technical recognition of the new materials and means by which the house was to be built. Materials were now so used as to bring out their natural beauty of character. The construction was made suitable to the appropriate use of machinery — because the machine had already become the appropriate tool of our civilization. (See essays written by myself at that time.)

To use our new materials — concrete, steel and glass, and the old ones — stone and wood — in ways that were not only expedient but beautiful was Culture now. So many new forms of treating them were devised out of the working of a new principle of building. I called it "organic".

Moreover, the house itself was so proportioned that people looked well in it as a part of them and their friends looked better in it than when they were outside it.

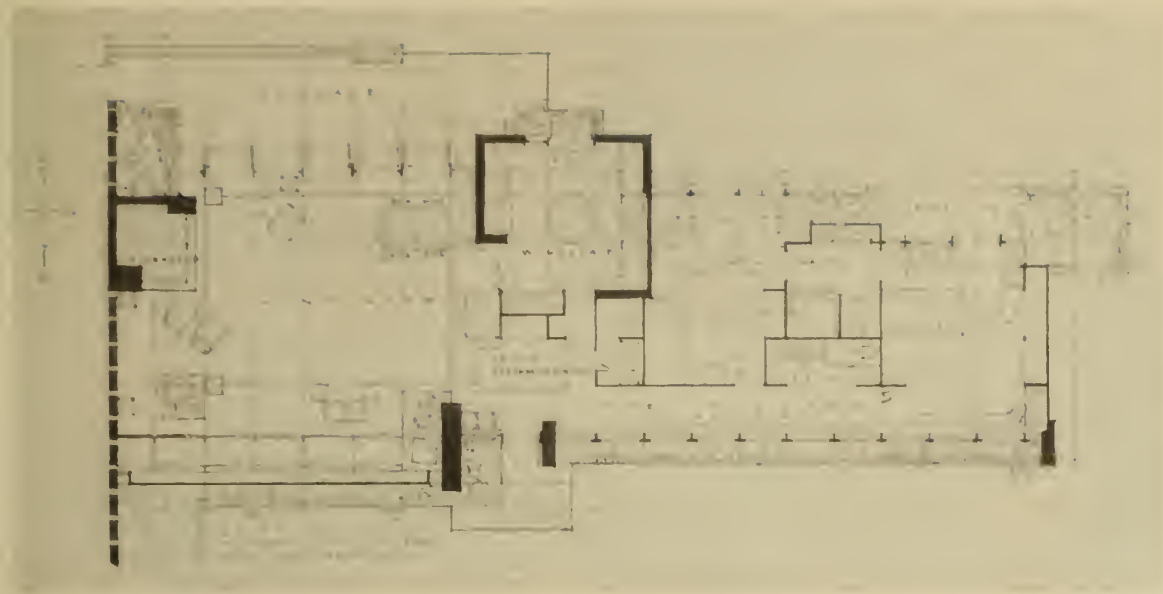
Thus a basic change came about in this affair of a culture for the civilization of these United States. What then took place has since floundered, flourished and faded under different names by different architects in an endless procession of expedients.

Here the original comes back to say hello to you afresh and to see if you recognize it for what it was and still is — a home for our people in the spirit in which our Democracy was conceived: the individual integrate and free in an environment of his own, appropriate to his circumstances — a life beautiful as he can make it — with her, of course.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT
New York, November 12, 1953



TO YOU THE
RESEARCH AND
ACCORDING TO
TO THE NATURE
BEING DON



In this 1,700 sq. ft. exhibition house lie Frank Lloyd Wright's suggestions to the average American who builds or buys a home — suggestions first made in 1900 when his houses embodying the same principles first appeared on the prairie outside Chicago. Here for the first time in the Architecture of the West the human scale in building proportion appeared with the open plan. This two-bedroom "Usonian" house has a simple in-line plan and is within the reach of many. Thousands of New Yorkers who walked through it experienced for the first time the design qualities Wright has talked about since the turn of the century: spaciousness and sunlight, human scale, warmth and solidity, a feeling of shelter, and a sense of the outdoors.

This house and the pavilion alongside it also represent a long-awaited tribute: the first Wright building erected in New York City. Part of a comprehensive exhibit of his 60 years of work, it was built next to the pavilion housing his drawings, models and photographs on the site of Wright's Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum to be built when exhibit is removed.





Low, closed side of living room unit, as seen from kitchen, has built-in seat with storage in a deep, sheltering cove that extends across the entire living room facing the fireplace. Clerestory windows are toward the street and the neighbors, assuring natural light on all sides of the room whatever the orientation — and affording privacy. Brick wall at far end is pierced in natural block pattern.

High, open side of living room, seen from entry, faces living terrace and view (walled in only because of New York City limitations). All furniture is by Wright or influenced by him including the specially designed spherical black kettle. In charge of construction: David Henken of Henken Builds, Inc., a former Wright apprentice, assisted by 14 boys of the Taliesin Fellowship. Wright estimates this house could be duplicated in the New York area for about \$35,000. Originally it was about a \$15,000 house — fifteen years ago.





View from terrace looking into living room. Tall glass doors extend to full height of 12' ceiling, throwing the big living room wide open to its terrace on occasion. Roof overhang is richly patterned with rhythmic openings and the ornamental dentil bonds characteristic of the whole structure; a place for vines overhead.

Sunlight and a sense of deep space play freely through the 26'x32' living-dining area, giving it a sense of great repose and comfort. Interior is warm in color and alive with deep red texture of brick, a checkerboard ceiling of red oak plywood, twinkling accents of light in brass spotlight plates, repeated in the piano hinges, on tall windows, and doors, copper fillets on shelves and tables. Folding screen makes kitchen an admirable part of the whole living room unit.





Toll central kitchen, itself planned as a ventilating feature of the entire living room unit, around a table for assembling of meals, has a toll view window at left and a skylight above—with built-in ovens, cabinets and sideboard accommodations.



A glimpse of the long gallery leading from entry to living room and bedrooms as 34 feet of storage wall alongside wall, a laundry alcove opposite. Hall lavatory-toilet is convenient to entrance and to living room (foreground).



At the end of this segregation of the bedrooms is the master bedroom, secure and intimate with its rich wood finishes, dramatic spotlighting, high windows filtering sunlight through patterned shutters, belonging to the style of the whole.

Taliesin team: apprentices on construction of pavilion and Usonian House:

John de Koven Hill, Curtis Besinger, Kenn Lockhart, John Geiger, Robin Molny, Kelly Oliver, Edmund Thomas Casey, Morton Delson, John Rattenbury, Edward Thurman, James Pfefferkorn, George Thompson, Herbert De Levie, David Wheatley.

A special thank you for able and timely assistance is due to Clay Irons of Irons and Reynolds — and to Hicks Nursery of Long Island. ?

A special compliment is due the splendid cooperation of Director James Johnson Sweeney of the Museum and more, well earned by his bouquet of girl assistants led by Donna Butler. Last, but not least, comes our genial host, Harry Guggenheim, Chairman of the Board of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT November, 1953

N. B. I want to say that the police in charge of the affair are gentlemen in the best sense of the word. Their cooperation has been perfect.

NOTE: This mock-up at the Museum represents a house costing, at this time, say about thirty to thirty-five thousand dollars, according to location. Originally the cost was about fifteen thousand. Times have changed.

The suggestion has been made that, after the exhibition, we sell the house at auction to be removed to any other site and permanently reestablished. This may be done. F. LL. W.



Photos- P. E. Guerrero